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Washington, DC - The following is a statement from Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04), emphasizing her position for Congress to finally pass health care reform, her support of reconciliation, and the need for government to oversee -not overtake- our nation's health care system.

"Our nation's health care system is broken, and it needs to be fixed. Tens of millions of American are uninsured, underinsured, or afraid of losing their coverage. Insurance companies continue to squeeze families by increasing health premiums and reducing coverage. Unless you are an insurance company or a Republican Member of Congress this is the time for action. It is time to pass health care reform.

"We have an historic opportunity to end discrimination by insurance companies for people with pre-existing conditions; close the Medicare 'donut hole' to protect senior citizens from paying high prescription drug costs; lower the cost of insurance for all Americans; improve affordability, access, and quality for everyone; and extend health insurance coverage to at least 30 million currently uninsured Americans. This reform agenda is about giving Americans more insurance choices - specifically the purchasing power that big businesses already enjoy and the same options that every Member of Congress has.

"Given the current state of health care today and the opportunity for Congress to take action, I fully support reconciliation - a legitimate, transparent, democratic, and authorized legislative process. Despite Republican claims, reconciliation shouldn't be feared. It allows for a majority vote in the U.S. Senate to pass legislation to help reduce the budget deficit.

"One of the numerous benefits of this plan is how it will reduce our nation's overwhelming deficit. Closer monitoring of the current Medicare system will help eliminate waste, abuse, and fraud. By extending health insurance to the uninsured we can reduce the federal budget deficit by no less than \$100 billion over the next decade. Making reform about paying for quality over quantity of care will also help reduce the deficit.

"Reconciliation will also 'correct' the current proposed version of health care reform by removing excessive provisions that some of my colleagues in the Senate have included. The provisions in question only benefit the constituents in states such as Florida, Louisiana, and Nebraska. I applaud President Obama for demanding that these special perks be stripped.

"Passing health care reform isn't about imposing a government-run health care system. In fact, it's quite the opposite. The government has a responsibility to oversee health insurance companies' practices and hold them accountable when they dump sick policy holders or gouge consumers with excessive premium increases. The government must protect millions of American families from denial of coverage. No one should ever have to think twice about asking for medical care but yet so many do.

"Republicans feign shock over what the Democrats have done for health care reform, accusing the Democrats of plowing this legislation through Congress. This is not true. When they had control of Congress, Republicans had endless opportunities to reform our nation's health care system, and they simply ignored the problem. Furthermore, President Obama has reached out to Republicans and asked them to weigh in and be part of the process even going so far as to incorporate their ideas. Republicans have responded by rejecting bipartisanship and embracing stonewalling in hopes of stopping this process altogether.

"There have been enough delays in the health care reform process. The American people deserve a simple up or down vote from Congress. I will be a vote for health care reform, and I urge my House colleagues to join me in fixing our nation's health care system."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.
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